

Small Group Guide: Joseph Thrown into Prison

Week 4 | Genesis 39:19-40:23

Opening Prayer & Ice Breaker (10 minutes)

Ice Breaker Question: Share about a time when you did the right thing but faced negative consequences anyway. How did that make you feel?

Sermon Recap (5 minutes)

Joseph's story continues with more hardship:

- Falsely accused by Potiphar's wife
- Thrown into prison despite his integrity
- Given responsibility over other prisoners
- Interprets dreams correctly but is forgotten by the cupbearer

Key Theme: Daily steps in the right direction don't always mean immediate deliverance. Sometimes disappointment precedes deliverance.

Discussion Questions

Section 1: The Lord's Presence in Prison (15 minutes)

Genesis 39:19-23

1. **Why do you think God didn't immediately deliver Joseph from false accusations?** What might God have been accomplishing in Joseph's character during this time?
2. **The passage says "the Lord was with Joseph" three times.** What is the difference between God being "with us" versus God removing our difficulties?
3. **How did Joseph experience God's presence practically in prison?** (steadfast love, favor, success) Which of these do you most need to experience right now?
4. **Joseph went from favored son to slave to overseer to prisoner to keeper of prisoners.** How do you think he maintained his faith through such dramatic ups and downs?

Section 2: The Lord's Positioning (15 minutes)

Genesis 40:1-8

5. **God strategically placed the cupbearer and baker in Joseph's life.** Can you identify people God has positioned in your life, even during difficult seasons? How might God be using your current circumstances to position you for future impact?
6. **Joseph said, "Do not interpretations belong to God?"** What does this reveal about Joseph's perspective on his gifts and abilities? How can we maintain this same humility?
7. **Joseph had "gone from being a favored son to the servant of imprisoned servants."** How do you respond when life takes you lower than you ever imagined? What helps you maintain perspective?

Section 3: Disappointment Before Deliverance (15 minutes)

Genesis 40:9-23

8. **Joseph accurately interpreted both dreams and asked the cupbearer to remember him.** Why do you think verse 23 says the cupbearer "forgot him"? Have you ever felt forgotten by God or people after doing the right thing?
9. **Joseph had to wait two more years in prison after this moment (we'll see this next week).** What sustained faith looks like during extended waiting periods? What practices help you trust God's timing?
10. **The sermon ended with: "Sometimes disappointment precedes deliverance."** Share an example from your life or someone you know where this proved true. How does this truth change how we view current disappointments?

Key Takeaways

Three ways we see the Lord work in Joseph's circumstances:

1. **The Lord's PRESENCE** - God was with Joseph even in trial
 - He wasn't alone
 - He received steadfast love
 - He was given favor and success
2. **The Lord's POSITIONING** - God put the right people in Joseph's life
 - Divine appointments happen even in prison
 - God was setting up future deliverance
3. **The Lord's PLAN** - God was working the bigger picture
 - Immediate deliverance isn't always the goal

- Character development happens in the waiting
- Disappointment often precedes deliverance

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge:

Choose one of the following to practice this week:

Option 1: Presence Practice Each day, identify one way you experienced God's presence, even in difficult circumstances. Journal these moments and share with the group next week.

Option 2: Perspective Shift Identify one current disappointment or difficulty. Ask God to show you how He might be positioning you for future impact through this situation.

Option 3: Keep Doing Right Like Joseph, commit to doing the right thing in one specific area this week, even if you don't see immediate results or recognition.

Personal Reflection Questions:

- Where am I tempted to give up doing the right thing because I'm not seeing results?
- How can I cultivate awareness of God's presence in my current circumstances?
- Who has God positioned in my life right now that I might be overlooking?
- What disappointment am I facing that might actually precede a deliverance I cannot yet see?

Prayer Focus (10 minutes)

Pray together for:

- **Presence:** That group members would experience God's presence in their trials
- **Perseverance:** Strength to keep doing the right thing even without immediate results
- **Perspective:** Eyes to see the bigger picture God is working
- **Patience:** Grace to wait on God's timing for deliverance
- **People:** Wisdom to recognize divine appointments and strategic relationships

Looking Ahead

Next week we'll continue Joseph's story and see how God brings deliverance in His perfect timing.

Homework: Read Genesis 41:1-40 before next week's gathering.

Closing Thought

"Daily steps in the right direction don't always mean immediate deliverance. Sometimes disappointment precedes deliverance."

Trust that God knows the bigger picture, even when you cannot see it yet.